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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

16 July 1984

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION

Issues and Prospects



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Summary

Representatives from about 150 countries will meet in Mexico City in August to hammer out a consensus on global population and development issues. Regional preparatory meetings showed that African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American delegates view economic development as the key to reducing fertility, mortality, and international migration. Developing country delegates will pressure the OECD countries--as they did at the last world population conference ten years ago--to increase what they view as lagging financial support for both population and economic development programs. The Soviet Union will attack the United States position and posture for the Third World media on peace and disarmament resolutions.

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This memorandum was prepared [redacted]  
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with the Office of African and Latin American Analysis and the  
Office of Soviet Analysis. Information as of 2 July 1984 was  
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directed to Chief, South Asia Division [redacted]

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The Conference in Brief

Delegates from United Nations member states are scheduled to meet at the International Conference on Population in Mexico City, 6-13 August. The meeting, pushed for by the developing countries, is to assess progress since the Bucharest conference in 1974 and endorse further action on population issues. Mexico's Interior Minister Manuel Bartlett will chair the official conference agenda which calls for delegates to address inherently contradictory issues such as:

- Reducing rates of population growth that developing nations view as detrimental to their economic goals while endorsing the right of couples to determine their family size.
- Managing rural-to-urban migration but protecting individuals' right to move freely.
- Affirming the preeminence of national immigration laws while urging that families of international migrant laborers and refugees be permitted to join family members for humanitarian reasons.

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The 1974 Conference

The Bucharest conference was held at the behest of the developed countries to encourage developing countries to reduce high rates of population growth. Delegates from Algeria, Argentina, and Brazil, amid heated north-south and east-west rhetoric, turned the conference into a long acrimonious debate over whether resources should be put into restraining population growth or into accelerating economic development.

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Many developing country delegates argued that only more rapid economic development--requiring a restructuring of the world's economic system--would bring about a reduction in their national population growth rates. At the end of the two-week conference, delegates agreed to a "World Population Plan of Action" that stressed investment in economic development. Conferees agreed that couples should have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education, and means to carry out their decision.

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1974-84: A Decade of Change

The "either development or family planning" argument of the 1974 Bucharest conference has, for the most part, given way to agreement that both economic development and family planning programs must be successful if population growth rates are to continue to fall. Unlike 1974--the year of quadrupled oil prices and developing country optimism that OPEC leverage would propel

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them to prosperity and lower population growth--1984 is a year with a weak oil market and a growing sense in many developing countries that economic growth will be slow and difficult to sustain. Developing country statements in the 1980s, while continuing to stress that accelerated economic growth will stimulate demand for family planning services, more frequently have stated that rapid population growth is neutralizing per capita economic gains. [ ] 25X1

The latest evaluations of global trends by the United Nations Population Division show that the world's population growth rate has only edged downward in desultory fashion from 1.9-2.0 percent in the early 1970s to the current rate of 1.7-1.8 percent (Table). The number of developing countries with organized family planning programs has increased, however, from 55 to 72 and most developing countries have sustained modest rates of economic growth during the 1970s. [ ] 25X1

- Much of the global progress reflects the change in China which halved its growth rate the past decade by advocating programs to limit childbearing to one or two children per family.
- In the developing countries, excluding China, the average annual growth rate has plateaued during the decade at about 2.4 percent.
- In Africa, population growth rates increased from 2.7 to 3.0 percent between 1974 and 1984, as death rate declines outpaced small birth rate declines. [ ] 25X1

Over three-quarters of a billion people have been added to the world's population since the Bucharest conference:

- Ninety percent of the increment live in the less developed regions--sixty percent of them in Asia.
- Despite China's progress in achieving dramatic declines in its rate of growth, seventeen percent (130 million) of the addition to the world's population have been in China.
- India and her South Asian neighbors accounted for 42 percent (317 million) of the increase in world population. [ ] 25X1

#### Regional Priorities

Discussions in UN-sponsored preparatory meetings indicate that the regional delegations have different priorities for the Mexico City conference:

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Africa

Delegates to the Second African Population Conference identified rural-urban migration, and corollary problems of rural development and agricultural self-sufficiency, as their highest priorities for action at Mexico City. African delegates view the Mexico City meeting as a conference on rural economic development, not fertility reduction. In their plan of action, "The Kilimanjaro Objectives on Population," they affirmed support for child-spacing as a health measure and indicated interest in fertility reduction as a consequence of economic development.

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Middle East

The "Amman Declaration on Population and Development" stresses the inseparability of population change and socio-economic development. Conferees argued that families must experience improved economic circumstances before couples will decide to reduce family size. They specifically rejected family planning separate from economic development as a means for reducing population growth in the Arab world.

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Latin America

Delegates to the Havana preparatory meetings emphasized the primacy of the family in population matters. Papers and discussions underscored the rights of individuals to freely decide the number and spacing of their children. The consensus of the delegates was that countries in the region suffering from problems caused by the depressed global economic situation could not fully implement social, population, or development programs.

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Asia

Delegates to the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians drafted a declaration which--in contrast to other regional positions--calls for determined intervention by governments to reduce population growth and mortality rates. The legislators identified the following goals:

- A reduction in the overall Asian growth rate to one percent by the year 2000.
- A decrease in mortality rates, particularly infant mortality rates, by 50 percent by the year 2000.
- A balanced distribution of population through policies to accommodate planned urban growth as well as to retain population in rural areas.

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Possible Disruptions

Despite efforts by the conference organizers to achieve wide-ranging consensus before the August meetings, several unresolved substantive and procedural issues threaten to disrupt the conference. The USSR is likely to present a major problem.

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We believe the Soviets have maneuvered deliberately since their withdrawal from the Los Angeles Olympics to build a platform at Mexico City from which they can assail the United States. The Soviet Union has a resolution before the conference which states that the problems of population growth and economic development can only be resolved successfully under conditions of world peace, disarmament, security, and cooperation among nations. The Soviet and Eastern Bloc delegations emphasized in all preparatory sessions that East-West disarmament and security matters should override population and economic development issues. The United States and other conference organizers were unsuccessful in moving the Soviets' peace and disarmament language to the preamble of the conference document where formal debate and action would not be required. [ ] 25X1

Moscow, in our view, will try to dominate and manipulate developing country media coverage during the week of the conference. The Soviets and their Eastern bloc allies may commandeer large chunks of the scant 27-36 total hours available for debate to embarrass the United States with peace and disarmament speeches. The USSR successfully introduced language to weaken the organizers' plans to limit each delegation's remarks to seven minutes on all action items. Conference delegates will be told only that it is "desirable" that they limit their remarks to seven minutes. [ ] 25X1

Differences between the developed and developing country delegations in the relative importance that they attach to the two strategies for reducing population growth rates--economic development and family planning--may polarize the conference along North-South lines as in 1974. Moreover, conservatives representing major religions in the Middle East, Africa, North America and at the Vatican have indicated that they may urge Mexico City conferees to eliminate support for specific family planning programs that they view as state interference in private family decisions. [ ] 25X1

Outlook

Mexican hosts, with the support of the OECD and most developing country delegates, will successfully constrain Soviet disruptions so that a consensus on population issues can be achieved. [ ] 25X1

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We expect the Mexican delegation to submit a "Mexico City Declaration" that:

- Calls on the developed countries to increase their bilateral and multilateral financial support for developing country population and economic development programs.
- Notes the urgent need for nations to accelerate declines in their population growth rates and increases in their economic growth.
- Finesses the politically sensitive conflict between individual rights and state authority by applauding both.

The Declaration will receive widespread support from conference delegates as well as substantial media coverage.  25X1

In our judgment, Asian delegates will stand alone in their call for specific national fertility-reduction targets. Countries will still be encouraged by the 1984 World Population Plan of Action to set such goals.

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Bucharest to Mexico City: A Decade of Population Change 1974-1984

<u>Geographic Region</u>	<u>Average Annual Population Growth Rate</u>		<u>Change in Population Growth Rate</u>	<u>Increment to Total Population during 1974-1984</u> (in thousands)	<u>Percentage Share of World Growth</u>
	<u>1974</u>	<u>1984</u>			
<u>World</u>	<u>2.03</u>	<u>1.67</u>	<u>-0.36</u>	<u>766,003</u>	<u>100.0</u>
More Developed Regions	0.89	0.64	-0.25	78,012	10.2
Less Developed Regions	2.46	2.02	-0.44	687,991	89.8
<u>Africa</u>	<u>2.74</u>	<u>3.01</u>	<u>+0.27</u>	<u>143,429</u>	<u>18.7</u>
Eastern Africa	2.94	3.23	+0.29	44,009	5.7
Middle Africa	2.50	2.70	+0.20	14,856	1.9
Northern Africa	2.44	2.88	+0.44	31,132	4.1
Southern Africa	2.32	2.53	+0.21	8,084	1.1
Western Africa	2.98	3.11	+0.13	45,348	5.9
<u>Americas</u>	<u>1.87</u>	<u>1.73</u>	<u>-0.14</u>	<u>109,173</u>	<u>14.3</u>
Latin America	2.51	2.30	-0.21	84,587	11.1
Caribbean	1.98	1.51	-0.47	4,343	0.6
Central America	3.17	2.68	-0.49	25,650	3.3
Temperate So. America	1.56	1.55	-0.01	6,573	0.9
Tropical So. America	2.51	2.39	-0.12	48,020	6.3
Northern America	1.05	0.89	-0.16	24,586	3.2
<u>Asia</u>	<u>2.35</u>	<u>1.73</u>	<u>-0.62</u>	<u>467,191</u>	<u>61.0</u>
East Asia	2.25	1.14	-1.11	150,199	19.6
China	2.37	1.17	-1.20	130,108	17.0
Other East Asia	2.21	1.75	-0.46	20,091	2.6
South Asia	2.44	2.20	-0.24	316,992	41.4
Southern Asia	2.41	2.19	-0.22	212,383	27.7
Southeastern Asia	2.39	2.06	-0.33	76,991	10.1
Western Asia	2.91	2.85	-0.06	27,618	3.6
<u>Europe</u>	<u>0.64</u>	<u>0.33</u>	<u>-0.31</u>	<u>17,607</u>	<u>2.3</u>
Eastern Europe	0.55	0.57	+0.02	6,746	0.9
Northern Europe	0.33	0.09	-0.24	511	0.1
Southern Europe	0.98	0.58	-0.40	8,521	1.1
Western Europe	0.58	0.06	-0.52	1,829	0.2
<u>Oceania</u>	<u>1.85</u>	<u>1.50</u>	<u>-0.35</u>	<u>3,621</u>	<u>0.5</u>
<u>USSR</u>	<u>0.95</u>	<u>0.93</u>	<u>-0.02</u>	<u>24,982</u>	<u>3.2</u>

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